

North Norfolk Skills Partnership

Report on the College of West Anglia Outreach Centre Closures John Morgan July 2007

This is a short report highlighting the response by the North Norfolk Skills partnership to the Outreach Centres closure. It includes four appendices covering:

- A. The minutes of the Meeting with College of West Anglia 22 March 2007
- B. The draft Business Plan for Sheringham Partnership looking at taking on the Learning Centre
- C. The costs as identified by COWA of the learning centres
- D. The enrolments at Sheringham and Fakenham in the 2006/07 academic year

Background

Members will be aware that following a motion at the District Council 31 January 2007 a meeting was called with the College of West Anglia (COWA) to explain their decision to close the outreach centres, in particular those at Fakenham and Sheringham. At the meeting held on 22 March the reasons for the closure were outlined (see Appendix A) and can be summarised as:

- a) falling numbers of students (see Appendix D) through changes in central funding support for learning – in particular the greater emphasis on level 2 vocational qualifications – and an assumed decline in demand for ICT learning
- b) the inappropriateness of the venues from DDA point of view and the aging equipment

The meeting tasked the Skills Partnership with identifying an appropriate response. A number of meetings were held and the Development Officer carried out research in both Fakenham and Sheringham.

The Response

In Sheringham there was a desire from the Local Area Partnership to find a way of keeping the learning centre open. COWA had offered to donate the computers, printers and the server to a community group in Sheringham. The Development Officer drew up a draft business plan (Appendix B). A meeting of an expanded Learning and Skills Focus Group for Sheringham was called 20 June 2007. However, aside from an offer of 5 hours a week support from Wellbeing In North Norfolk) WINN it was felt that the costs were too high, the venue was not DDA and the equipment was too old. No group was willing to take the lead.

In Fakenham it was identified that there was and is a significant offering of provision aside from the learning centre. Thus part of the response needed to be to make certain that the community was aware of what is available.

The sub group came to the conclusion that the issue that needed to be addressed affected the whole District and not just Sheringham and Fakenham. Thus while the Partnership should and would support any appropriate local initiative* it was felt that the response needed to be applied to the District as a whole. In short it goes back to the key reason for the Skills Partnership:

1. Identify need
2. Identify how that need can be met
3. Identify how this can be sustained

Future Action

The Development Officer has been charged with drafting a project proposal around an action research approach focussed on information, advice and guidance delivered in each of the key settlements. A project proposal will be circulated under separate cover.

* The Extended Rural Norfolk Federation has been given funding to develop the new 14-19 Vocational Diplomas. Their aspiration is that this will be expanded so that the adults and businesses can also benefit. To that end they have applied to Investing In Communities to be commissioned to develop a vocational learning centre in Fakenham, the North Norfolk Skills Partnership endorsed this initiative at their 18/07/2007 meeting.

Appendix A

NOTES OF MEETING WITH COLLEGE OF WEST ANGLIA FAKENHAM LEARNING CENTRE - 22 MARCH 2007

Present:

Steve Blatch - NNDC
Beverley Evans – NCC Adult Education
John Morgan – NNDC / North Norfolk Skills Partnership
Su Pointer - NNDC
Richard Polley - LSC
Peter Stewart – College of West Anglia
Don Venvell – Chair North Norfolk Skills Partnership
Judy Youngs – NCC Adult Education

Overview and why we are here – Steve Blatch

Steve outlined the District Council's concern at learning of the College of West Anglia's decision to withdraw from the provision of Outreach Learning Centres at Fakenham and Sheringham in North Norfolk and at Hunstanton. Concern at the impact this would have in rural areas on people accessing learning and personal development opportunities.

Peter – College decision taken reluctantly and at personal regret to Peter who opened the Fakenham Centre.

Decision has been taken on grounds of changing funding context and need for College to operate on a sound financial footing. Arguably the centres could have been proposed for closure sooner. Closures not only in North Norfolk but elsewhere in West Norfolk and Cambridgeshire. Peter did have a discussion with Beverley Evans about Adult Education regarding the implications of the closure for adult learners and hope that some future provision / partnership delivery would be co-ordinated between Adult Education and the college although not through an Outreach Centre presence.

Reasons for decision

- Significant downward trend of enrolments over 4 years
- Increasing financial costs of the Outreach Centres – all required a subsidy from the College in the last financial year. Decline in income and maintenance of overhead costs.
- Change in curriculum provision for adult learners due to Government funding, removal of funding for non-qualification based learning.
- At Fakenham lack of building compliance with DDA which would have cost £25,000 to address; opportunity for break in lease to be exercised.

Why did enrolments decline?

1. Change in Government/LSC policy – funding framework is significantly different from that when the Outreach facilities were opened and that trend is projected to continue moving forward. Increased competition amongst providers of Adult Learning means fixed premises assets – contestability of contract provision. Shift in nature of FE provision to a limited number of clear priorities. Historically colleges met economic, social and individual learning needs. Now priority in 16-19 year olds and the needs of the economy. Significant reduction of adult part-time learning opportunities. Increased provision of first Level 2 qualifications. College has had to respond to Government priorities in order to sustain the viability of the college.
2. Government wants to shift funding from Government and Colleges on to learners and employers. This has been a national trend over three years and will continue for a further two years. By 2009 learners are going to have to meet 50% of course costs.
3. Adult Community Learning is now known as Personal Community Development Learning (PCDL). This has been reduced. College of West Anglia has no PCDL credits, Paston the same. NCC Adult Education has all the PCDL credits in Norfolk. This means that the College has had to move from PCDL type courses into qualification courses. This has particularly impacted on Outreach facilities. Prior to College of West Anglia formation in 2003/04 enrolments have fallen from 22,000 to 10,000.
4. There may be new money through the Train to Gain Scheme now that the importance of securing qualifications is paramount. It is difficult to deliver LAA in rural Norfolk as LSC funding is urban based, but ESF might help.

Richard Polley endorses fully what Peter has said.

Main provision in the Fakenham Outreach facility has been short courses PCDL type courses. New Government focus on workforce skills and new delivery on Train to Gain. Some LAA outcomes are difficult to deliver and particularly difficult / challenging in rural areas.

NNDC concern is not necessarily about withdrawal of lifestyle courses for retired – it is about engaging people of working age returning to work, transferable skills, and addressing skills and aspirations. Supports work based learning provision in principle.

Investing in Communities showed a general low skill low aspiration picture, though this needs geographical profiling.

Beverley Evans – LSC funding is more qualification output related. Longer courses / commitment by learners. Allocation drives down numbers of people who can be supported. Adult Education FE outcomes – 14,000 three years ago – now between 8,000 and 9,000.

Currently learners are meeting 37.5% of their course costs and this will rise to 42.5% and 50% employee / individual contribution during 2008 and 2009 after historically being 25%.

There is inequality in the system – urban / rural and regional and within region. Aspirations – key issue, deep seated, not related directly to outreach centres. Needs greater focus / links between schools and colleges through the 14 - 19 year old agenda. The 16-18 population is increasing in Norfolk and this is squeezing adult/FE funding further in comparison with other parts of the country.

Beverley - PCDL agenda. Government has paused and County still receives £1.6 million in recreational courses without qualifications which have been used to support taster courses as an introduction to a qualification. In future, the Government is not expecting PCDL to fund “first rung” provision. For Beverley – the bite size introduction courses are now missing from provision / funding.

Looking forward for provision in Fakenham.
What action is needed/possible

1. Funding available for Fakenham area?
2. Develop partnership approach for learning and skills delivery
3. LDF shows growth of housing, with strong economy Fakenham/Wells area
4. Sustainable venues are needed – Merchants Place model?
5. IT provision via eg LearnDirect/Ufl
6. Example of Attleborough
7. COWA could offer tutor facilities and Sheringham are looking at Internet Café option

Agreed should be a North Norfolk Skills Partnership project, involving local stakeholders and replicating the Cromer model, with for example local libraries acting as contact points. The scheme should be based on an effective

Future partnership delivery in Fakenham, building on the Cromer Merchants' Place model, though this was supported through Objective 2. There is an issue around sustainability.

Other areas of discussion

Adult Education will maintain presence in Fakenham for now and is holding discussions with College of West Anglia about future shared provision. The lease on the Old Rectory has 18 months to run – it is kept as a venue for delivery rather than an administrative base.

John – NNSP pulling together a strategy to inform future strategic structures, Shaping the Future, LAA etc. Also looking at an operations level based on research of current provision etc and with links into the Business Forum. Seeking to develop programme of support / bid through the IIC programme.

Beverley – Adult Education operates across County – centres per se are not really important. Four(five) key offices - Attleborough, Wensum Lodge, Tudor House, Great Yarmouth and King's Lynn. Beverley doesn't see having an administrative presence in Fakenham but wants a learning delivery facility.

Steve – overview of LDF and Fakenham's role as a future centre of residential employment and service facilities. Projected provision of up to 1400 new homes in town to 2021.

Peter - What is received locally:

1. Coherent offer for 14 – 19 for aspiration agenda – through Fakenham College and for vocational courses, College of West Anglia, City College, Norwich and Easton College.
2. Vocational work based strand – for young people where there is a geographical issue and emigration of talent / lack of local opportunities for career development. Needs work based learning offer. College of West Anglia currently offers product in area, which could be developed further.
3. Work place learning – not apprentice based – but assess – train – assess on site learning in the workplace – Train to Gain, entry level and Level 2. College of West Anglia and Paston work in North Norfolk in the delivery of these programmes. College of West Anglia is delivering NVQ on job training for cleaners and care workers in Fakenham!!

Gap – career change / redirection / self employment where there is no real provision under the above model – and Su Pointer stated this is a significant concern to the District Council.

No IT provision at Old Rectory – could this be established. Could Learn Direct operate from facility. John is keen to see some Internet based learning centres.

Description of Attleborough model by Beverley. Funding / outputs etc.

Tim expressed concern about discussion of a centre and stated colleges would not look at this form of provision in the future through a fixed centre, without addressing sustainability issues.

Agreed that discussions should be taken forward by the NNSP possibly seeking to replicate Merchants' Place and exploring IIC funding to consider future modest provision under the LAP model.

Appendix B

Business Case for Sheringham Learning Centre

Advantages – will of the population and partnership

- donation of 15 PCs, printers and the server by COWA

Costs – from the current COWA costs it would appear that £30k is require to cover overheads – this does not include any salary or capital costs

Setup – while the COWA donation can act as the core, they will not be giving licences which are estimated to be an additional £7-£10k. The system will have to be set up from scratch again – assume that it will be a weeks work so 40 hours @ £25 per hour say £1,000.

Staffing – all staff would have to be CRB checked. Suggested that would need a minimum of 2 responsible people plus holiday/sickness cover – current COWA costs are £50k.

Questions?

1. Revenue possibility by charging for use?
2. What would the opening hours be?
3. Possible to tie in with either the wardrobe or the partnership shop?
4. Is it enough DDA compliant to run?

Financial Needs

| | | |
|-------------------------------|---------|---------------------------------------|
| Set up costs | £15,000 | |
| Annual Running Costs | £30,000 | |
| Annual Staffing Costs | £50,000 | (assumed current COWA staffing level) |
| Possible contributions | £3,000 | (wardrobe) |
| User fee at £1 for 1000 users | £1,000 | |

First year funding required £91,000

Other options:

Training venue – downstairs only say £15 per hour for 10 hours a week, £150 per week for 40 weeks would be £6000.

Sublet Office Space – upstairs only – no DDA

Or why not take the equipment and try to set something up elsewhere? With the wardrobe? At the shop? At Oddfellows?.....

Appendix C

The costs as identified by COWA of the learning centres

Breakdown of overheads

| | Pay | Non Pay | Property | Other | Total |
|------------|---------|---------|----------|--------|----------|
| Fakenham | £83,959 | £35,196 | £16,246 | £7,422 | £142,823 |
| Sheringham | £51,714 | £15,183 | £7,987 | £7,319 | £82,203 |

In addition an additional 25% of costs should be added to cover the other indirect costs of services from the College (Marketing, IT Services, Management etc). Finally any capital expenditure (cost of servers, PCs etc) is to be added.

OutCentres

Year ending 31 July 2006

| | | Fakenham | Sheringham |
|--------------|----------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| | | 550 | 554 |
| Direct Costs | | Actual | Actual |
| 3020 | Equipment < 500 | 677 | 0 |
| 3021 | Equipment Repairs | 22 | 0 |
| 3022 | Books/Journals/Media | 14 | 263 |
| 3024 | Consumables | 41 | 34 |
| 3028 | Recharge from Print Room | 3,458 | 2,130 |
| 3034 | College Shop Re-Charge | 558 | 642 |
| 3057 | Printing & Stationery | 119 | 58 |
| 3059 | Public Licences | 127 | 0 |
| 3061 | Charge Cards | 72 | 96 |
| 3062 | Postage | 266 | 90 |
| 3063 | Telephones (Rental) | 7,187 | 7,086 |
| 3064 | Telephones (Calls) | 36 | 138 |
| | Car Allowances Casual User | | |
| 3101 | F/T | 301 | 0 |
| 3200 | Rents/Leases | 30,000 | 11,917 |
| 3203 | Rates | 2,324 | 480 |
| 3205 | Water | 206 | 157 |
| 3210 | Electricity | 7,207 | 938 |
| 3213 | Gas | 0 | 1,159 |
| 3222 | Cleaning Contracts | 3,957 | 3,594 |
| 3226 | Refuse Collection | 0 | 543 |
| 3300 | Routine Maintenance | 941 | 330 |
| 3305 | Security Contracts | 786 | 347 |
| 3350 | Service Contracts | 563 | 322 |
| 3391 | Planned Maintenance | 0 | 118 |
| 3500 | Purchases Food | 0 | 49 |
| | | <u>58,863</u> | <u>30,489</u> |

Appendix D

The enrolments at Sheringham and Fakenham in the 2006/07 academic year

| | Fakenham | | Sheringham | |
|-------|----------|------|------------|------|
| | Female | Male | Female | Male |
| 04/05 | 431 | 202 | 226 | 134 |
| 05/06 | 350 | 134 | 199 | 89 |
| 06/07 | 250 | 95 | 133 | 50 |

| | Fakenham | | Sheringham | |
|--------------------|----------|------|------------|------|
| Age range in 06/07 | Female | Male | Female | Male |
| up to 25 | 30 | 7 | 5 | 1 |
| 26-49 | 95 | 34 | 32 | 8 |
| over 50 | 125 | 54 | 96 | 41 |
| total | 250 | 95 | 133 | 50 |